

Update from the Department of Early Learning August 2009

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Some call it “the lazy days of August,” but there is no time for a break at DEL during these hot summer days! We are moving forward with our Early Learning Advisory Council and other key partners on drafting a statewide Early Learning Plan, which will serve as the roadmap for services to children and families in our state ages birth to 8 to make sure all kids are healthy, safe and ready for school. Also, Gov. Gregoire has requested that Superintendent of Public Instruction Randy Dorn and I deliver a proposal for the 2010 legislative session that ensures all children in Washington have the benefit of early childhood education. We are working at this with the help of the Early Learning Plan work groups.



YOU can help create this plan. We've posted a new Early Learning Plan section on our Web site, where you'll find the latest news on the Plan (www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/elp.aspx). I also invite you to volunteer for our “key communicators list” for the Plan, offering feedback and guidance as we go. E-mail communications@del.wa.gov if you're interested in learning more.

So why does our state need an Early Learning Plan? Here are a couple sobering statistics:

- There are basic health needs that create great risk for children: In 2007, 11 percent of Washington children had no health insurance. In 2008, half of all births in our state were Medicaid-funded. The number of children living in families requiring food stamps has risen by 30 percent since 2007.
- Kindergarten teachers say fewer than half of kids enter school with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.
- Between 1996 and 2006, median prices rose 30 percent but the cost of early care and education rose 60 percent.

We invest a lot in kids and families in our state— think of the possibilities if the various state agencies and organizations “talked” to each other more, and if children had services from birth that set them on the path to success. That's what we're aiming for with this plan.

Imagine a state where families have access to a menu of options: home visiting, health and nutrition services, affordable preschool classroom learning, help finding and paying for child care, parenting information and support, and all the other resources we know are essential to healthy child development. And providers and educators have the support they need to offer high-quality early

learning settings and partner with other community services. (Read more about the early learning plan work and timeline at www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/elp.aspx.)



Finally, please join me in welcoming Sangree Froelicher back to DEL. She is serving as acting assistant director for our Family Partnerships Division while Juliet (Torres) Morrison is on maternity leave. I know many of you have worked with Sangree over the years—she's worked in so many capacities on behalf of Washington children and families. We are very happy to have her back at DEL.

—Bette Hyde, Director

New on DEL online...

Check out our new information about school-age care! We worked with School's Out Washington to include information about this important segment of the early learning population:

About School's Out Washington

www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/schoolsout/Default.aspx

About school-age care

www.del.wa.gov/care/school/Default.aspx

Also new on DEL's Web site this month, just who are the people who make up DEL's Leadership Team? Visit www.del.wa.gov/about/leadership.aspx to read a few fun, child-friendly facts about them!

Reminder:

DEL has information for child care providers about flu outbreaks at www.del.wa.gov/development/health/flu.aspx

PDC update

The Professional Development Consortium is required to submit an update on its work to the Governor and Legislature by September 15. The group last met on July 16, and focused mainly on compensation and incentives, and professional standards.

The PD Consortium meets regularly to discuss how a clear, comprehensive early learning professional development system in our state, as required in House Bill 1943. Learn more and view meeting minutes at www.del.wa.gov/

KCTS 9 accepting nominations for exceptional caregiver awards

KCTS 9 public television is now seeking nominations for their Washington State Exceptional Caregiver Awards program. The program honors excellent family home child care providers around the state. The Department of Early Learning is proud to support this program.

Six providers will be honored at KCTS 9's fall professional development conference. If you know someone deserving of this award, nomination forms are available at www.KCTS9.org/caregivers or by calling 1.800.930.6060. The deadline for nominations is Thursday, August 20.

Summer safety tips

A wealth of information is available to help keep kids safe during these fun summer months. Visit the Washington State Department of Health summer safety tips page to read about:

- Swimming safely
- Road trips
- Avoiding summer pests
- Vacation vaccinations
- And more!

www.doh.wa.gov/Topics/heatsafe.htm



Providers request extra development charts to teach, show parents

The response was enormous after DEL partnered with the Department of Health (DOH) CHILDP Profile program to send “Watch & Help Me Grow!” development charts to all licensed child care providers in our state. Providers called and requested almost 1,500 additional copies in English and almost 500 copies in Spanish in just two weeks.



“We love them,” one child care center wrote. “Can you please send us more so that we can post them in each classroom and throughout our facility and talk to parents and staff about it?”

DEL has a limited supply left and will continue distributing extra copies until the quantity is depleted. Federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) dollars for infant/toddler quality initiatives helped support this partnership.

To view the charts, visit:

www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/childprofile/documents/devchrtbirth18m.pdf (birth to 18 months)

www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/childprofile/documents/devchart18m-3yr.pdf (18 months to 3 years)

Providers may request additional copies of the charts in English or Spanish by e-mailing communications@del.wa.gov or calling 1.866.482.4325 (toll-free).

Upcoming early learning events...

August 8

Early Learning Community Fair

Hosted by the Foundation for Early Learning and partners

www.earlylearning.org/events/community-fair-2009

August 10 and 11

Starting Strong conference

Hosted by OSPI, DEL and partners

www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/default.aspx

August 24 to 28

KING 5 and Thrive by Five Washington series “Learning for Life”

This month’s topic: Preschool (watch for an in-studio interview with DEL Director Bette Hyde on August 25!)

www.king5.com/learning-for-life/